

# DIESEL SCHOOL BUSES AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH:

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Why school-bus idling is harmful

- Diesel exhaust is a likely human carcinogen, containing fine particles, commonly called "soot."
- Children are especially affected by soot because their lungs are still developing and they breathe 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults.
- Fine particles pose a significant health threat because they easily reach deep into the lungs.
- Diesel exhaust worsens asthma, bronchitis and existing allergies and may contribute to decreased lung function, lung cancer and heart disease.
- Diesel exhaust ranks among the air pollutants that the EPA believes pose the greatest public health risks.
- Between 10 percent to 13 percent of all students in grades K-12 have asthma.

### Safety first

School buses are the safest mode of student transportation, according to the School Bus Information Council, but we can make them much safer by eliminating unnecessary idling.

- 14,500 school buses operated in New Jersey in 2003
- Each child rides a school bus an average of 1.5 hours per day

### It's the law!

New Jersey law prohibits idling by diesel vehicles (most school buses and large trucks) for more than three minutes.

- Call (877) WARN-DEP to report idling
- Eliminating unnecessary idling promotes good health *and* saves money

### What you should do

New Jersey school districts and school-bus drivers are encouraged to protect our children's health by implementing best practices to reduce harmful diesel emissions. These best practices include:

- Turning off engines when waiting to load and unload students
- Replacing oldest buses in the fleet first as they often release the most emissions
- Using newest buses for longest routes
- Maintaining buses to eliminate any visible exhaust
- Developing strategies to prevent buses from queuing
- Keeping bus windows open while in transit when comfort allows
- Encouraging children to sit in front seats if bus is not full
- Avoiding congested roads when possible
- Avoiding directly following other diesel vehicles

### Learn more

Visit [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org)



State of New Jersey  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Lisa P. Jackson, Commissioner

